

Somerville Disability Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: 6/28/05

Time: 6:30-8:30 pm

Meeting Place: Walnut Street Center

In Attendance: Tom Peters (Comm. Membr.), Joe Medeiros (Comm. Membr.), Bonny Carroll (Comm. Membr.), William Vienneau (Comm. Membr.), Alfred Rubio (Comm. Membr.), Martin Polignone (Comm. Membr.), Alderman Dennis Sullivan (Comm. Membr.), James Robertson (Comm. Membr.) and Jim Halloran (IT Administrator for City of Somerville)

C. Fletcher: This month's meeting is open. Commission President J. Chiampa will not be here tonight, due to an illness. The Mayor will also not be here tonight, as new members will not be sworn in. Apparently the procedure is more complicated than we thought.

B. Carroll: There is a procedure, where the appointees have to be approved by the Board of Alderman. But I will let Denis speak more about it.

D. Sullivan: That's right. Any new commission members in the City have to be vote on and approved by the Board of Alderman. I will bring it up with the Board of Alderman, so new members can be sworn in on Thursday July 14th. It could bring more attention to the Commission

C. Fletcher: Does the board want to be sworn in at City Hall or at our next meeting?

J. Medeiros: I think it is a good idea to go to City Hall. I will just need a ride.

M. Polignone: I think we should be sworn in at City Hall also.

T. Peters: Me too.

C. Fletcher: Does anyone have any issue with being sworn in at City Hall? I make the motion to be sworn in at City Hall on the 14th.

J. Medeiros: I second the motion.

C. Fletcher: All in favor say I. (the motion was voted on unanimously to be sworn in at City Hall). Does anyone have information or issues to present?

B. Carroll: I am attending an ADA training for my position with the City. I will report back any new information to the Commission. One interesting thing I learned was that some cities are creating revenue for that city's Disability Commission by having volunteers take pictures of cars (including plates) that are committing handicapped parking violations. The fines were \$200 and \$100 went to the Commission.

I want to introduce Jim Halloran, who is in charge of IT projects with the City of Somerville. He is here to t/a creating a web page for the commission on the City's website.

J. Halloram: The commission can have their own webpage on the City's website. I can help you create the page and you can include any information you want. All new content has to be approved by the Website oversite personnel to make sure no inappropriate images or language is included.

C. Fletcher: Can we post Commission Meeting Minutes?

J. Halloran: Sure, you can include meeting dates, articles, anything you want. You could have a map on line and include all handicapped parking spaces in the City.

W. Vienneau: Could we include a map of all handicapped accessible public buildings too?

J. Halloran: Yes you can. There will have to be a designated person that goes through a training from my department, so you can set up and make changes to the webpage.

C. Fletcher: Can there be two people who are trained?

J. Halloran: Sure.

E. Feldman: Is there any other ways the City communicates with disabled residents in Somerville?

J. Halloran: I'm not sure what you mean.

E. Feldman: I mean, adapting websites to accommodate viewers' disabilities. I think it is important that the Disability Commission's webpage is accessible to people with disabilities. Could the Commission work with the city to make the City's website more accessible?

J. Halloran: I would be willing to look into options.

E. Feldman: I would be willing to research other city websites to see how they are addressing these issues.

C. Fletcher: The Disability Commission would also be willing to collaborate with the city to write a grant to cover the costs of making the website more accessible, of it is cost prohibitive. Are there any other questions for Jim? Thank you for coming to our commission meeting.

J. Halloran: Thank you for having me. Unfortunately, I have to go to another meeting.

C. Fletcher: Does anyone have any other information to bring up?

A. Rubio: Is there a way of completing the process of applying for elderly housing; for example, Joe needs more care and has applied to the Somerville Home for he and his wife. And we can't seem to complete the process and he is in need of more support.

D. Sullivan: You can contact Pat Jehlen to help resolve this and she will help get it done. I can call her, if you want.

A. Rubio: That would be great. Also, I have another issue. People who have handicapped placards are parking all day in handicapped parking spaces in parking lots and then going off to work. It is making it difficult for other people with handicaps to go out into the community, because there are no spaces available. I am having a hard time finding a parking spot when I go to pick up Joe's medication.

D. Sullivan: You can contact Acting Director, Stephen Jones about the laws on this issue. I want the Commission to know I am very excited to be on this Commission, because handicapped

accessibility issues are very important to me. I have created a list of buildings in Somerville that are not handicapped accessible (submitted list to commission).

T. Peters: All buildings should be handicapped accessible.

D. Sullivan: I believe it would be helpful if the Commission wrote a letter to the Board of Alderman, stating the priorities of the commission; this way, the Board of Alderman would be aware of your issues and support them. It is also helpful to get public exposure on these issues and get articles in the local newspapers. Michael Jonas at the Boston Globe City Weekly is a good resource.

E. Feldman: Is the City addressing any handicapped issues?

D. Sullivan: The City has a transition plan that includes projects for the next several years. I will look at the list of projects that involve disability issues and bring that information to the next meeting.

E. Feldman: I think it is important for the Commission to educate the community about disability issues and I suggest that we could have our own weekly cable show on SCAT and have guest speakers discuss disability issues. I am a SCAT member and would be glad to be involved. I know Joe and Al have a show.

B. Carroll: I like that idea. You would be surprised how many people watch shows on SCAT. I do a weekly show on parenting and so many people stop me on the street and say that they watched my show.

J. Robertson: I think that it is a good idea. I use to have a cable show and I think it was very informative. You could have guest speakers and have a co-host who is a lawyer specializing in disability law.

E. Feldman: I think we should form an Education Committee to discuss this and other issues regarding educating the community about disability issues/.

C. Fletcher: I think that is a very good idea. Who would be willing to serve on an education committee with Eileen? I volunteer to be on the committee.

T. Peters: I volunteer.

William: I also volunteer

C. Fletcher: I would like to bring up an issue to be addressed by the Commission. E. Mathews was on the commission form many years. Her work schedule interfered with her attending for quite some time and she also was not aware of when meetings were being held. She would like to attend the meetings again. Someone was also referred from Bonny who was interested in joining. The issue is we are at our maximum number of Commission Members, according to our bi-laws. We have a number of options, such as changing the bi-laws. What do the other members think?

T. Peters: I don't think we should change the bi-laws. We have enough members.

E. Feldman: I believe in inclusionism. Different people can bring different strengths and energy to the commission. So, I am in favor of changing the bi-laws.

M. Polignone: I agree with her; different people can bring different talents to the commission. I want to learn more about ADA issues, so I can be a resource to the commission.

J. Medeiros: We have had associative members before, they can attend meetings, but cannot vote. I think that may be a good idea.

E. Feldman: We could have the associate commission members show their commitment, before they became members.

B. Carroll: I like the idea of not changing the bi-laws and filling positions as associative members.

M. Polignone: I agree.

C. Fletcher: Any other comments? Shall we vote on the issue? Tom.

T. Peters: I make the motion that we don't change our bi-laws and have new members as associative members.

J. Medeiros: I second the motion.

C. Fletcher: All who say I to the motion? (The motion was unanimously passed).

T. Peters: I want to bring up another issue. I want to recommend that we award Cambridge Somerville Elder Services with a citation from the commission.

C. Fletcher: Tom, what are some of the reasons you think they should receive the award?

T. Peters: They go above and beyond what they are supposed to do for the elderly and disabled. They have helped me quite a bit.

A. Rubio. I sit on their board and am very aware of the good work they do in Somerville.

M. Polignone: I am involved with the Somerville News Newspaper and would be willing to get coverage of events like this in the local papers.

C. Fletcher: That would be very helpful Marty. Does anyone else have any comments before we vote on the motion to give a citation to Cambridge Somerville Elder Services? (No comments)

T. Peters: I want to make the motion to give Cambridge Somerville Elder Services a citation for the commission.

M. Polignone: I second the motion.

C. Fletcher: All in favor, say I. (The commission unanimously passed the motion to give a citation to Cambridge Somerville Elder Services). Tom, do you want to contact Cambridge Somerville Elder Services and schedule the event with them.

T. Peters: yes I would.

C. Fletcher: If there are no other issues, the meeting is over.

